

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL LANDMARK
(Results in automatic listing in the California Register)

CALIFORNIA POINT OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

NAME OF HISTORIC PROPERTY

Bryte Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial Hall

DRAFT

ADDRESS

1708 Lisbon Avenue

CITY/STATE/ZIP CODE

Bryte (West Sacramento), CA 95691

COUNTY

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO.

Yolo

14032006000

NAME OF OWNER OF HISTORIC PROPERTY

Bryte VFW Post 9498

ADDRESS

1708 Lisbon Avenue

CITY/STATE/ZIP CODE

Bryte (West Sacramento), CA 95605

NAME OF APPLICANT

APPLICANT TELEPHONE NO.

West Sacramento Historical Society

916-374-1849

ADDRESS

P.O. Box 1202

CITY/STATE/ZIP CODE

West Sacramento, CA 95691

RECOMMENDED BY CHAIR, STATE HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

DATE

APPROVED BY DIRECTOR, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

DATE

DESIGNATION NO.

Page 1 of 2 *Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Bryte VFW Memorial Hall

DRAFT

P1. Other Identifier: _____

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

*a. County Yolo County and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad West Sacramento Date 1992 T ; R ; \dot{y} of \dot{y} of Sec ; B.M.

c. Address 1708 Lisbon Avenue City (Bryte) West Sacramento Zip 95605

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone , mE/

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, decimal degrees, etc., as appropriate)

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

The building now called the Bryte VFW Hall was built in 1946 as a community center and movie theater. Overall, it could be classified as vernacular architecture with the function of the building as the dominant factor. The minimal aesthetic treatment on the exterior includes facets of a simple, unadorned style moderne. It is a one-story structure constructed in masonry with a barrel roof, a clipped 45-degree entry door façade with geometric, symmetrical planar forms configuring the exterior elevations. The front door is framed by faux stone added after the original construction. The lack of a coherent style reflects the building design by a non-architect, the decline in popularity of the style moderne in the 1940's and immediate post-war austerity. The building includes an addition built after the original construction that is a framed stucco shelter for storage. The original windows facing Lisbon and Hobson Streets are filled in with framing and a stucco finish. Two windows facing Hobson Street and the parking lot are painted the same crème or light beige color as the body of the building, but the windows remain functional. There is no

historical record or pictures that document the original color scheme for the exterior. A separate shipping cargo container sits near the parking lot. The interior is divided into two major rooms the first in which is located a bar with a small seating area and the second which has a low stage and functions as a larger seating area for community events. There is a kitchen and three storage closets. An attic type space above the kitchen originally housed the projection room for the movie theater but is now used for storage. There is a parking lot to the left of the building. A commemorative plaque dedicated to the builder, Jordan "Pappy" Ramos, sits to the left of the front door.

P5a. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP 13 Community Center/Social Hall; HP 36 Ethnic minority property NA Native Americans

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5b. Description of Photo: (view, date, accession #) Northeast view of building from Lisbon Street, June 20, 2015

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary #

HRI #

Trinomial

NRHP Status Code

Other
Review Code

Reviewer

Date

Listings

Page 1 of 2

*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Bryte VFW Memorial Hall

P1. Other Identifier: _____

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: X Historic Prehistoric Both

June 1945 Building Permit issued; December 1945 dedication for opening; newspaper articles (see attachments)

*P7. Owner and Address:

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9498

1708 Lisbon Avenue

West Sacramento, CA 95605

*P8. Recorded by: (Name, affiliation, and address)

Ileana Maestas

West Sacramento Historical Society,

PO Box 1202

West Sacramento, CA 95691

P9. Date Recorded: June 20, 2015

*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)

California Historical Landmark Nomination

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.")

none

*Attachments: NONE Location Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record

Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record

Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (List): newspaper account of building permit issuance and events

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

Page 2

- B1.** Historic Name: Bryte Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial Hall
B2. Common Name: Bryte VFW Hall **B3.** Original Use: Community Social Hall-Theater **B4.** Present Use: VFW Post
***B5.** Architectural Style: Vernacular
***B6.** Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

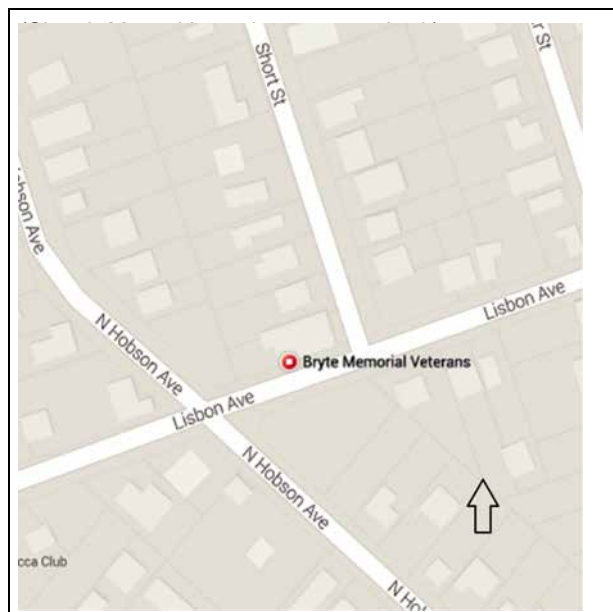
In June 1945, Gwendolyn Ramos and Arthur Sanders were granted a permit by Yolo County to build a \$10,000 community center in Bryte (*Sacramento Bee*, June 21, 1945). The Bryte Memorial Auditorium was dedicated in December 1945 and the building was listed as being owned by Jordan Ramos, Gwendolyn Ramos and Art Sanders (*Sacramento Bee*, December 7, 1945). Longtime residents remember Jordan “Pappy” Ramos as being the primary motivator behind building the theater for the local Bryte community. Dennis Freitas, a longtime Bryte resident, remembers that the original layout of the building was very basic. The entrance was at the northeast corner off Lisbon Street. A small ticket booth was to the right of the entrance and the bathrooms were to the left. A stage at the east end of the building was flanked by two “dressing rooms.” A projection room was at the west end of the building on a second level. The projection room was accessible through a staircase in a storage room at the west end of the building. The main area was open and according to Freitas, the windows must have been covered very early in the auditorium’s history because he never remembers natural light in the building. Sharon Freitas, another longtime Bryte resident, says that the building was always “gloomy” in the interior.

Although the building was dedicated in late 1945, projectors were not installed until mid-1946. Unfortunately, the movie theater was not a financial success; films were projected onto a screen set-up on the stage but the seats were just chairs set on the floor. There was no slope to the floor so viewing was not comfortable. In December 1946, the building was sold to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 9498 and renamed the Bryte Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial Hall. Newspaper advertisements indicate that movies were shown until at least 1948 (*Sacramento Bee*, April 8, 1948). Sharon Freitas said that Art Sanders was a big movie buff and it was under his management that movies continued to be shown even after the hall was bought by the VFW. A barbershop operated out of the dressing room to the right of stage for many years after the war. (Freitas 2018) There was definitely a close association between the original builders of the hall, Jordan Ramos and Art Sanders, and the new VFW owners. Post 9498 was made-up of WW II veterans that lived in Bryte and Jordan Ramos was especially involved with the Bryte community. He lived across the street from the hall and owned the “Bryte Spot,” a bar and restaurant where veterans gathered to play pool and have drinks. Jordan “Pappy” Ramos died in 1965 and the following year a plaque on a granite marker was installed to the left of the entrance at the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall. It reads: “This plaque erected in memory of Jordan “Pappy” Ramos 1902-1965 for his community service. ‘Greater love hath no man than this—that a man lay down his life for his friends’”

There is no documentation or recollection of when the bar, kitchen and partition in the current configuration were added although the Freitas family knows it happened after the VFW purchased the hall. This makes sense since at this time, VFW halls were places dedicated to the social lives of veterans so bars and kitchens were standard in VFW buildings. One of the former dressing rooms is now utility closet and the other is the office. The projection room became a storage area once the projectors were removed sometime after 1948. Current members of the hall recall that the awning and stonework by the entrance are relatively new, perhaps done around 2000.

Considering that two posts (Post 9498 and Post 9054) were using the building during the period of significance (1950-1957), this hall was a very vibrant place and it played an important social role for the Bryte community. Movies were shown, social dances were held, California Indian dancers performed, concerts, high school graduations, Portuguese winter festas, church events and family gatherings were all done at the

(This space reserved for official comments.)



Bryte VFW Memorial Hall.

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features: small parking lot and grassy area

B9a. Architect: Unknown b. Builder: unkown

*B10. Significance: Theme Native American community
 Area Bryte community of West Sacramento Period of Significance 1950-1957 Property Type Multi-room, single story building
 Applicable Criteria The property is associated with an individual or group having a profound influence on the history of California.

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also, address integrity.)

See continuation sheet

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP13 VFW Hall, HP36 significant gathering place for Native Americans

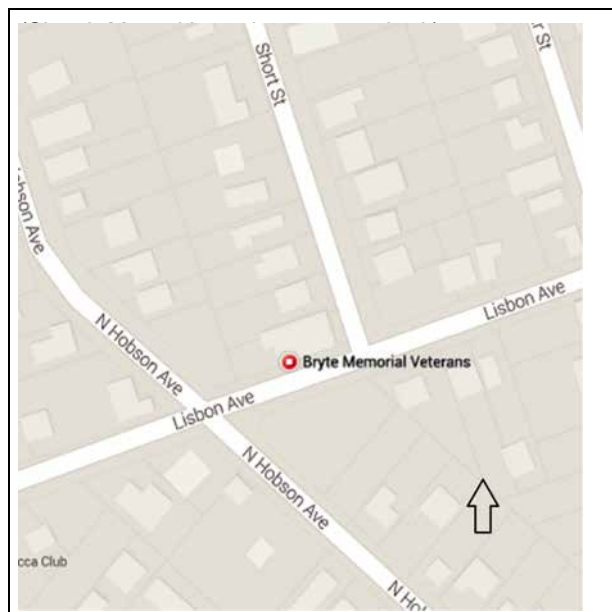
*B12. References: See continuation sheet

B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator(s): Ileana Maestas, Sacramento Historical Society

*Date of Evaluation: December 2018

(This space reserved for official comments.)



CONTINUATION SHEET

Property Name: Bryte Memorial VFW Hall

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B10. Significance

This nomination is for the Bryte Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial Hall, located in West Sacramento, to be listed as a California Historical Landmark. It meets two of the criteria for nomination:

- The first, last, only, or most significant of its type in the state or within a large geographic region (Northern, Central, or Southern California).
- Associated with an individual or group having a profound influence on the history of California.

The Bryte Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Memorial Hall was the home for VFW Post 9054, the first all-Indian VFW post in California. Post 9054 was in existence from 1950 through 1957, which is also the period of significance for this nomination. The building served not only as a meeting site for local American Indian veterans but also as a place for events which eventually led to the revival of Northern California Indian heritage. Through Post 9054, the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall had substantial ties to the California Native American community as it transitioned, like the rest of the United States, into the post WWII era. This period witnessed a large change in the perception of where Indians saw themselves as American citizens. While the building itself is modest, it provides a setting to tell a unique story of American Indians, WWII, California Indian activism, the revival of traditional culture and the ability to retain Native American heritage in an urban environment. An amazing amount of contemporary California Indian leaders, associations, government agencies, State Parks and traditional dancers can all trace their roots to events that happened at the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall and its affiliation with Post 9054. Based on these associations, the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall meets the criteria to be listed as a California Historical Landmark.

The Bryte VFW Memorial Hall is located in the City of West Sacramento in eastern Yolo County. This city has a complicated naming history. East Yolo is located west across the Sacramento River from the City of Sacramento. Washington Township was established in 1849 and renamed Broderick in 1893. Later, the West Sacramento Company established Riverbank, renamed it Bryte and West Sacramento, in 1912/1913.

As the City of Sacramento grew during and after the Gold Rush, east Yolo remained rural; agriculture, fishing, shipping and railroad employment were its dominant industries and small communities developed, each with its own distinct identity. The area, originally called Riverbank, eventually became the town of Bryte; it was established 1912 and named after George Bryte Sr., a local dairyman and son of pioneer Mike Bryte an early sheriff of Sacramento.

After WWII, the community of Bryte grew with an influx of returning GI's. Housing became attainable through the GI bill so Bryte, like many US cities had a housing boom. Three years after the war ended, the population of eastern Yolo County had swelled from 5,185 in 1940 to 11,225 by 1950. In 1987, the East Yolo communities of Bryte, Broderick, West Sacramento, and Southport incorporated into the City of West Sacramento.

Bryte became a distinctive community for Russian, Asian (Japanese), Portuguese (Azores, Madeira, and Cape Verde Islands), and California Indian families. It later developed into the largest Russian settlement

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Property Name: Bryte Memorial VFW Hall

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north of San Francisco following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917-1918. Known as White Russians, they immigrated to the United States, some moving to Bryte to escape the civil war and Communism under Vladimir Lenin. A few remaining descendants of these early immigrants have remained. The influence of the Portuguese immigrants in Bryte can be seen in street names such as Lisbon and San Pedro Park where the famous “San Pedro Festa” honoring the patron saint of Madeira, has been celebrated since 1922. Many Portuguese and Russian families were instrumental in establishing the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall after World War II.

Bryte also became a refuge for many mixed Hawaiian-Indian people whom had been identified by the federal government as part of a band known as the “Verona-Sacramento-River-Indians”. In 1916, Special Indian Agent John Terrell of the Department of Indian Affairs, which would later become the Bureau of Indian Affairs, conducted a special census, which reported 34 individuals of Native American and Hawaiian ancestry in Sutter and Sacramento counties. Residents of mixed Hawaiian, Indian, and Portuguese heritage resided within Bryte to rear their families.

Jordan “Pappy” Ramos was the primary advocate for the building of what would eventually become the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall. Ramos was born in Madeira Island, Portugal in 1903 and immigrated to Oakland, California in 1906. In 1933, Mr. Ramos moved to Bryte to be closer to his family where he opened a specialized food market that catered to the local Portuguese population. In 1934 Ramos and his family opened a bar called The Bryte Spot and then a second café called the Gwen Drop Inn (named after his wife Gwendolyn); both were important social meeting places for local Portuguese organizations.

Jordan Ramos, affectionately known as “Pappy” was a very generous person and was always looking for ways to enrich the community; his family was always involved with his business and community endeavors. Ramos had a vision of providing a movie theater in Bryte as most of the families did not have cars and the young people could not afford to go into Sacramento. He also saw the need for a larger building for the events of the growing community of Bryte. In 1945, Gwendolyn Ramos, (Jordan’s wife) and Art Sanders (Ramos’s brother-in-law) were granted a permit by Yolo County to build a \$10,000 community center in Bryte. The Bryte Memorial Auditorium opened in late 1945 and movie projectors were added in 1946. The building was listed as being owned by Jordan Ramos, Gwendolyn Ramos and Art Sanders. According to local author Shipley Waters’ *Roots of a New City*, “The Bryte Theater opened on August 4, 1946 and showed films in both Portuguese and English. Although their ticket prices were reasonable—fifty cents for adults and twenty cents for children—they were out of business as a theater by the end of the year. The building was bought by Post 9498, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and dedicated on June 19, 1947. It has been used for that organization and for the community ever since.” Newspaper advertisements indicate that the VFW continued to show movies at least through 1948. Upon the sale of the hall, Ramos quickly became involved in the VFW and hosted community events like social dances, holiday parties and meetings for two local Portuguese lodges. After his death in 1966, a plaque was erected to his memory at the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall to acknowledge the contributions that he made to the community of Bryte.

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The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States or VFW is one of the oldest and largest veterans associations in the United States. Established in 1899, the American Veterans of Foreign Service was one of several small societies, which provided opportunities for comradeship among veterans from the Spanish American War. In 1913, several of these societies combined into a national organization called the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Over the ensuing decades, the role of the VFW evolved beyond a social club. The organization provides veterans services such as benefits training, legal advice and scholarships. It is also one of the major advocacy groups for veteran's affairs. Membership is open to veterans from all branches of the US military that served on foreign soil or hostile waters. Historically VFW posts also have an Auxiliary attached to the club. The Auxiliary is made up of volunteers, typically the wives of post members that help with activities. Nationally the Veterans of Foreign Wars is a non-profit organization funded through membership, private donations and sponsorships. On the local level, the VFW is organized into posts or chapters where members can socialize with other veterans as well as take advantage of veteran's services and stay updated on veteran's affairs; posts are funded through memberships and special events. Posts must pay membership dues to the national organization. Many posts own their own buildings however, some chapters meet at restaurants, social halls, churches or other rented spaces. Posts that have their own buildings can earn extra income by renting out their spaces, and some have eating establishments and bars. New posts can be established through organizing and electing a Post Commander.

After World War II, a record number of VFW chapters were established all over the world. Veterans were eager to gather and continue the camaraderie they had experienced in the war. In eastern Yolo County returning GI's, eager to retain their military communities, had established three VFW chapters by 1950. Post 8762 (located on Gateway Oaks Drive) was chartered in 1946. The Bryte VFW Post 9498 was established in 1947 at the Bryte Memorial Hall. Post 9054, the all-Indian post was established in 1950 and used the Bryte VFW Hall for its meetings. Reflecting a national trend, it was not unusual for so many VFW posts to be incorporated within such a small locality.

World War II had a significant and lasting impact on American Indians; when the United States entered World War II, Indians responded like the rest of the country and enlisted in every branch of the armed services. By the end of the war 25,000 Indians had served in the military; according to the BIA, at least one third of Indian men left reservations to serve in the war. On the home front another 40,000 Indians had left the reservations to take up war related jobs. This meant that half the able-bodied Indian men, who had not entered the military and one-fifth of the Indian women, left the reservations for war related work. The Second World War brought the first mass migration of Indian workers off the reservation for jobs in defense plants, shipyards and airplane industries.

With this many Indians experiencing life off the reservation, all at one time, for an extended period, tribal perspectives in the United States began to evolve. Through the war effort, Indians had participated, alongside their white counterparts, in the larger American community. Indian men returned home with new expectations and new insight as to where they, as Indians, fit into American society. In *"American Indians in World War II"* author Alison R. Bernstein writes, "The military experience had opened their

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eyes to the world beyond their lands and traditions. It gave many Indians a taste of life off the reservation.” After the war ended, Indian veterans took advantage of the GI Bill to acquire housing and education benefits. This period saw many first time Indian college graduates who became the lawyers and advocates that drove the fight for Indian land rights in the 1950s and 1960s.

Wartime jobs and Federal Indian relocation programs moved Indians off reservations. In the Bay Area of California, there were significant populations of Cherokee, Navajo, Plains Indians and California Indians. After the war, a significant number of Indians chose to live in the city, which led to a new generation of what became known as urban Indians. For Indians that chose to live in the city, there was a strong need to identify as “Indian” (Fixico 2000). Urban Indians gathered to celebrate their community and retain their “Indianess.” This movement of Native Americans into the cities began what is commonly known as the Pan-Indian Movement. Tribes that were not related began to socialize and create communities.

Following World War II, many Indian veterans moved to cities to take advantage of G. I. Bill benefits and low-cost mortgages. From 1941 to 1950, the American Indian population in urban centers more than doubled from 24,000 to 56,000. A number of American Indian people enrolled in Sacramento area colleges and vocational programs from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s (McKee 1988). Local VFW Halls were popular gathering areas for Indian veterans to share their wartime experiences, find services/aid for their families and gather as a community. These gathering spots often became centers of American Indian sociopolitical organization and urban pan-Indianism. (Fixico 2000) Many California Indian veterans and their families left their reservations and rancherias to move to cities for jobs and housing. California urban Indians were joined by other Native Americans like the Apache, Hopi, and Papago nations in Arizona and New Mexico, and Cherokee from Oklahoma (Bernstein 1999).

It is during this time that the federal government established the Native American Health Centers in many cities. These clinics attempted to provide services to urban Indians that were typically available on reservations. They became networking places for Indians to find Indians in cities. Since WW II veterans were creating VFW and American Legion Posts at a record pace, and Indian veterans began to process their own experience in the war, it made sense that all-Indian posts were established. California had two of the earliest all-Indian VFW posts; the first was Post 9054 established in 1950 and the second was Post 7347 established in 1964.

California Indians are unique among North American tribes. Large cities and agrarian cultures never developed among California Indians. Scholars argue that the reason for this had to do with California being so resource rich that indigenous people could survive without having to grow food. Tribes sustained themselves with hunting, fishing and gathering plant foods sometimes moving seasonally to take advantage of weather and food resources. Pre-contact people lived on the coast, in the deserts, valleys, foothills and mountains. Due to the abundance of food and other resources, there was never a need for complex governmental structures and cities to evolve. At the time of contact, it has been estimated that there were over 125 different tribes in California, each with its own set of traditions, cultures and language.

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Contact with Europeans began in 1769; the Spanish arrived with the missions, which had devastating effects on tribal life. The Gold Rush had a particularly lasting impact because white “invaders” came in droves destroying the hunting, fishing and gathering places for the Northern tribes. Many California Indians became landless and survived by working for farmers or ranchers. Beginning in the late 19th century, the federal government began to set-up reservations (called rancherias in California) for landless northern California Indians. None of the rancherias provided enough land for Indians to practice their traditional life ways although they were able to retain a certain amount their cultures. Presently there are over 100 federally recognized California Indian tribes and 78 entities petitioning for recognition. According to the 2010 Census, California has the highest Native American population in the United States.

“Donald Warner of San Francisco department commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars, instituted the 17th district all-Indian VFW Post in West Sacramento on July 29 [1950].

Officers installed by Darold D. DeCoe, Jr., department senior vice-commander, are Kesner C. Flores, commander; Robert Sargent, senior vice-commander; Raymond Taylor, junior vice commander; Benjamin Johns, Chaplin, Lloyd Taylor, surgeon, Lloyd Walloupe, advocate; David M. Chavez, quartermaster; Everett Sargent, Marvin Walloupe and Raymond Paddy trustees.

The post is the only one in the state which is composed of all Indian veterans of foreign wars.”

[Indian Valley Record, Plumas County, August 10, 1950]

The 17th District All-Indian VFW Post 9054 was instituted at the Bryte VFW Hall on July 29, 1950. Meetings and events of the chapter were held at the Bryte VFW Hall, which was owned and operated by VFW Post 9498. None of the members of Post 9054 lived in Bryte; most traveled from Elk Gove, Ione, Amador county, Plumas county, Sacramento and the Bay Area to attend meetings and dances.

Sixteen names were listed as charter members:

Loren H. Burris ARMY (Miwok)

David M. Chavez

Kesner Flores ARMY (Maidu) Post Commander

John S. Gorbet ARMY (Maidu)

Benjamin Johns ARMY

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Lloyd Joseph ARMY (Maidu)

Lloyd Joseph Jr. ARMY (Maidu)

Elmer Moman NAVY (Miwok)

Raymond Paddy ARMY

Robert W. Sargent

Everett E. Sargent

Lloyd Taylor ARMY (Miwok)

Raymond Taylor NAVY (Miwok)

Arthur J. Walloupe ARMY (Miwok)

Lloyd J. Walloupe ARMY (Miwok)

Marvin Walloupe ARMY (Miwok)

A Sacramento Bee article dated July 28, 1950 includes Harold E. Burris (Miwok) and David Porter (Miwok).

The charter members that formed the All-Indian Post 9054 were primarily from the Miwok and Maidu tribes of Northern California. During the period of significance, many lived in Sacramento County but places of origin include the counties of San Francisco, Monterey, Plumas, Sacramento and Lassen; military records indicate most were veterans from the Army and Navy and they ranged in age from 20 to 33 when they enlisted. Most served overseas in the Pacific and European theaters. Prior to the war, their professions included truck drivers, farmers, electricians and lumbermen. Some were single some were married; there were at least two sets of brothers, a set of cousins, a father and son, and brother-in-laws. There was also an Auxiliary made up of the wives and sisters of the Indian vets and many of these women made names for themselves in local and national Indian politics. The founding members of the All-Indian VFW Post 9054 are a virtual who's who of influential California Indians. These people were the founders of modern California Indian activism and encouraged the preservation of California Indian heritage. Many of their descendants still live locally and remember attending events at the hall as children.

The Indian organization most closely associated with the Bryte All-Indian Post 9054 was the Federated Indians of California (FIC). The FIC formed in 1946 in Sacramento in order to press Indian land claims cases before the Indian Claims Commission Act (ICCA) on behalf of all California Native peoples (Castaneda 2010). The ICCA was an attempt to correct long-standing land issues between the federal government and tribal administrations.

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As the United States developed into a country, indigenous populations were displaced from their lands; migration, broken treaties, land grabs and war removed tribes not just from their lands but also from their traditional lifeways. The federal government recognized it had failed to uphold its responsibility toward Native peoples and began a series of programs to address the land issues. Between 1933 and 1945 the government attempted to make amends with tribes by creating the Indian Reorganization Act (also called "Indian New Deal") which attempted to end the government's policy of actively trying to assimilate Indians into mainstream society. While the Act did restore a limited amount of sovereignty to the tribes, it did not unravel the complex issue of Native land rights. In 1946 the federal government passed the Indian Claims Commission Act (ICCA), hoping to resolve tribal land claim issues for the last time. The United States Supreme Court, quoting from the legislative history of the ICCA, stated "The chief purpose of the [Act was] to dispose of the Indian claims problem with finality." The ICCA was intended as a mechanism by which tribes could make claims for the return of their lands or monetary compensation for lands taken. When this legislation passed in 1946, most tribes in the United States saw an opportunity to be in the driver's seat to get compensation for land through the ICCA.

Prior to WWII, it was rare that Indians were their own advocates. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the federal department that made policy directly affecting American Indians, was staffed almost completely by non-Indians. After leaving the reservation to participate in WWII, Indians now had the knowledge to champion Indian rights. Through their war participation, multitudes of young Native Americans participated in and alongside the more dominant white society. Because of the war, Indians realized what they could do on their own, instead of the paternalistic arrangement that they had through the BIA. (Bernstein 1999) Now, they knew how to act in white society, they knew how government and bureaucracy worked; through the GI Bill many were able to go to college and become attorneys and advocates. When the ICCA passed the Indians jumped at the opportunity to fight their own battle. Some scholars assert that the commission was conceived as a way to thank Native Americans for their unprecedented service during the war.

The best way for tribes to petition for their land rights through the Act was to be in Washington DC in order to lobby the government face to face. Tribal people were shrewd and they learned how to draw attention to their causes; members would wear traditional regalia to congressional meetings, knowing that the media would take pictures and write stories on their efforts. Traveling to Washington DC to petition for their rights however was difficult; with no large funding organizations to contribute to their travel expenses, tribes had to pay for the trips themselves. The social dances held at the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall organized by Post 9054 and the FIC were fundraisers to help defray the costs for Northern California Indian leaders to travel to Washington DC to testify before the ICCA. (Castaneda 2010)

Post 9054 was directly affiliated with the Federated Indians of California. The association was one of several that were dedicated to addressing California Indian land claim issues. This included the Mission Indian Federation, Federated Women's Club, the California Indian Rights Association and the Indian Board of Co-operation. These groups competed to attract California Indians into their organization each promising that they were the best option to win land claims before the federal government. It is well

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documented that some of these associations took financial advantage of Indians by insisting that if Indians did not pay membership dues to a particular organization, then the Indian would forfeit any claim to being compensated during the land claims process.

The FIC was a somewhat later addition to these organizations. Formed the same year as passage of the ICCA, the FIC focused their energy on representing many landless, urban Indians in Northern California. To compete with membership in some of the older, more reputable land claims organizations, the FIC used a new tactic. First, they eliminated dues or fees for membership; any California Indian, regardless of their status, was eligible to register with the FIC. Second, the FIC promoted themselves as being the only organization formed by Indians and run by Indians. Most of the other groups had non-Indian directors and staff. This paternalistic set-up angered Indians because they never felt they were up front advocating their agenda nor had they seen any progress or compensations from the efforts of these non-Indian run associations. The FIC took advantage of this attitude and gained a large following in Northern California. The FIC was strategically centered in Sacramento, the state Capitol that gave its members convenient access to legislators. The *Sacramento Bee* (Feb 9, 1948) reported a meeting with then Governor Earl Warren where he smoked a “pipe of peace” and voiced his support for the FIC’s land claim efforts against the federal government.

The FIC did not have formal offices or meeting space so most business was conducted out of members’ homes. Auxiliary members Kitty Flores (wife of post commander Kesner Flores), her sister Pansy Marine, along with their mother Marie Potts, had become early members of the FIC, and by 1947, they were serving on its executive committee. Marie Potts was instrumental in organizing and fostering urban Indian activism in Sacramento (Castaneda 2006). In 1949, she took over as editor of the *Smoke Signal*, a newspaper founded by Kitty Flores to “institutionalize the FIC’s authority and establish its superior credibility over other organizations and print media that were neither owned nor controlled by California Indians.” The *Smoke Signal* covered a broad spectrum of news and events relevant to all Indians throughout California. It was a key form of media that popularized the Bryte VFW Hall as an urban Indian gathering location in Sacramento (Castaneda, 2006).

In the late 1940’s social dances among Indians in Northern California were a popular past time. (Personal communication-Glen Villa) The events provided attendees a place to network and enjoy their shared Indian ancestry. Through word of mouth and local newspapers, the dances were advertised and Indians from Sacramento, Elk Grove, Amador County, Ione and Yolo County came to dance, eat and socialize on a regular basis. People of multiple American Indian heritages, including the Miwok, Maidu, Nisenan, Paiute, Pomo, Navajo, and Cherokee were attracted to these social dances. These were the urban Indians that had moved off reservations and into large cities in the hope of finding better opportunities. The events moved around the region wherever a dance hall or ballroom could be afforded. These locations included the Dante Club, the Sacramento City Club, and VFW Halls in Florin and Elk Grove. However, in 1950 with the establishment of Post 9054, the dances acquired a permanent home at the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall.

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Access to the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall allowed Post 9054 to create a “place” for Indians. In this place, Indians, displaced from their traditional lands, gathered for community, networking and social dances; these dances had hired bands and were potluck affairs. All over the country, Indians in the cities found opportunities to gather and form Pan-Indian associations. The social dances at the Bryte VFW was part of this national trend.

It is hard to quantify how many significant Northern California Indian political and cultural achievements can be linked to the All Indian VFW. Several significant California Indians, while not members of the post, were closely associated with its members. For example, internationally recognized Native American artist Harry Fonseca (Portuguese/Maidu) was born in Bryte and attended some of the Post 9054 dances with his father John Fonseca, who ironically was a member of the Portuguese community of Bryte (Flores 2013).

The Bryte VFW Memorial Hall was the site for the revival of traditional Miwok dancing. Bill Franklin (Miwok), brother of founding member Loren Burris, was concerned that Miwok culture was being lost due to, among other things, the effects of Miwok people not knowing the culture of their ancestors. (Bibby 1993) He inserted himself among many traditional people to learn the history and customs of his elders. Encouraged by Jack Dyson, who was curator of the State Indian Museum (California State Parks), He convinced several Miwok elders, who still remembered the traditional songs and dances to perform during the intermissions of the social dances. When the band took a break, Franklin, Dyson and several other Indians put on Miwok regalia and exhibited traditional dances. Jack Dyson allowed Franklin’s dancers and members of the FIC to use regalia and artifacts from the Indian collection at California State Parks at these dance demonstrations. Franklin wanted to expose younger Indians to traditional dances and inspire them to take interest in their Miwok heritage. The venue at the VFW Hall provided an Indian audience to watch the dances. In an oral interview from 1993, Mr. Franklin said:

“The first time we ever danced out in the public was at the Bryte VFW Hall, in West Sacramento. It was there, we had Mrs. Starkey singing, and Albert Clifford, and myself, and uh, there was another lady from Auburn. I don’t remember her name, which I should. But, we sang for the group. And there was Billy Villa, Guy Wallace, and Marvin Potts that danced. The first, first time we ever danced at this, that was the first public appearance we put on at the VFW Hall in Bryte.”

Bill Franklin would go on to form the Mewauk Dancers and then the California Indian Dance and Cultural Group; these groups were the precursors to all the Miwok/Maidu dance groups that exist today. The demonstrations of traditional dancing and singing which led to the revival of traditional Northern California dances began at the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall. Bill Franklin would eventually go on to spear head many California Indian institutions in the 1960s and the 1970s including Indian Grinding Rock State Park, California Indian Days and the Native American Heritage Commission. It is possible none of these things would have happened had it not all started for intermission entertainment at the Bryte fundraisers (Villa 2018).

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Archival research and oral interviews with the children and grandchildren of veteran members have not turned-up a reason for why VFW Post 9054 discontinued. Jerry Brady, VFW, Department of California Adjunct said that most chapters close due to declining enrollment and lack of membership renewals. The post actively tried to recruit new members through articles in the *Smoke Signals* newspaper however since this was an all-Indian chapter, there was a limit to the amount of Indian veterans that could be approached to join. The VFW Archives lists that Post 9054 was declared defunct on May 17, 1957. Veterans of Post 9054 must have remained close with Post 9498 which owned the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall because Post 9498 Commander John Fisher, Jr. presented a donation to the "Miwuk Indian Acorn Festival" in 1966, the first year in which this festival was held on the grounds of the Tuolumne Indian Rancheria. (*East Yolo Record*, 1966).

In 1964 a second all-Indian VFW Post 7637 was built on the Viejas Indian Reservation in San Diego County . This post primary served the Indian veterans in southern California but it also eventually closed due to declining enrollment. While the Viejas post was the first All-Indian Post to be **built**, the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall was the home of the first All-Indian post to be established in California.

Even though Post 9054 was only in existence for seven years, its legacy is amazing. Members of the Wilton Rancheria, Ione Band of Miwoks, United Auburn Indian Rancheria and Susanville Indian Rancheria have family members that were either veteran members of the post, belonged to the Auxiliary or attended the dances. Newspapers from Sacramento, Plumas County, the Bay Area, Greenville and Madera announced its establishment. The *Sacramento Bee* and the *Smoke Signal* were faithful about reporting when new Post Commanders were installed over the seven years of its existence. Anybody and everybody in the Northern California Indian community knew about the post and there was a huge sense of Indian pride about having a post made entirely of California Indians.

The legacy also includes its close association with the Federated Indians of California. Through the fundraising dances at the Bryte VFW Hall the FIC was able to travel to Washington DC and advocate for Indian land rights before the Indian Claims Commission. The veterans and Auxiliary of Post 9054 were the founders of early California Indian activism and set the example for their descendants. Finally, the revival of traditional singing and dancing can be traced to performances done at the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall. Elders who still remembered the traditional ways exposed younger Indians, attending the social dances, to their heritage. This in turn inspired the next generation to learn the dances and the legacy of this can be seen through the many Northern California Indian dance groups that exist today.

Based on this history, the Bryte VFW Memorial Hall meets two of the criteria for nomination: It was the location of the first All Indian VFW Post in California, and it was associated individuals and groups that had a profound influence on the history of California especially its Native American population. Therefore, this building meets the requirements to be listed as a California Historical Landmark.

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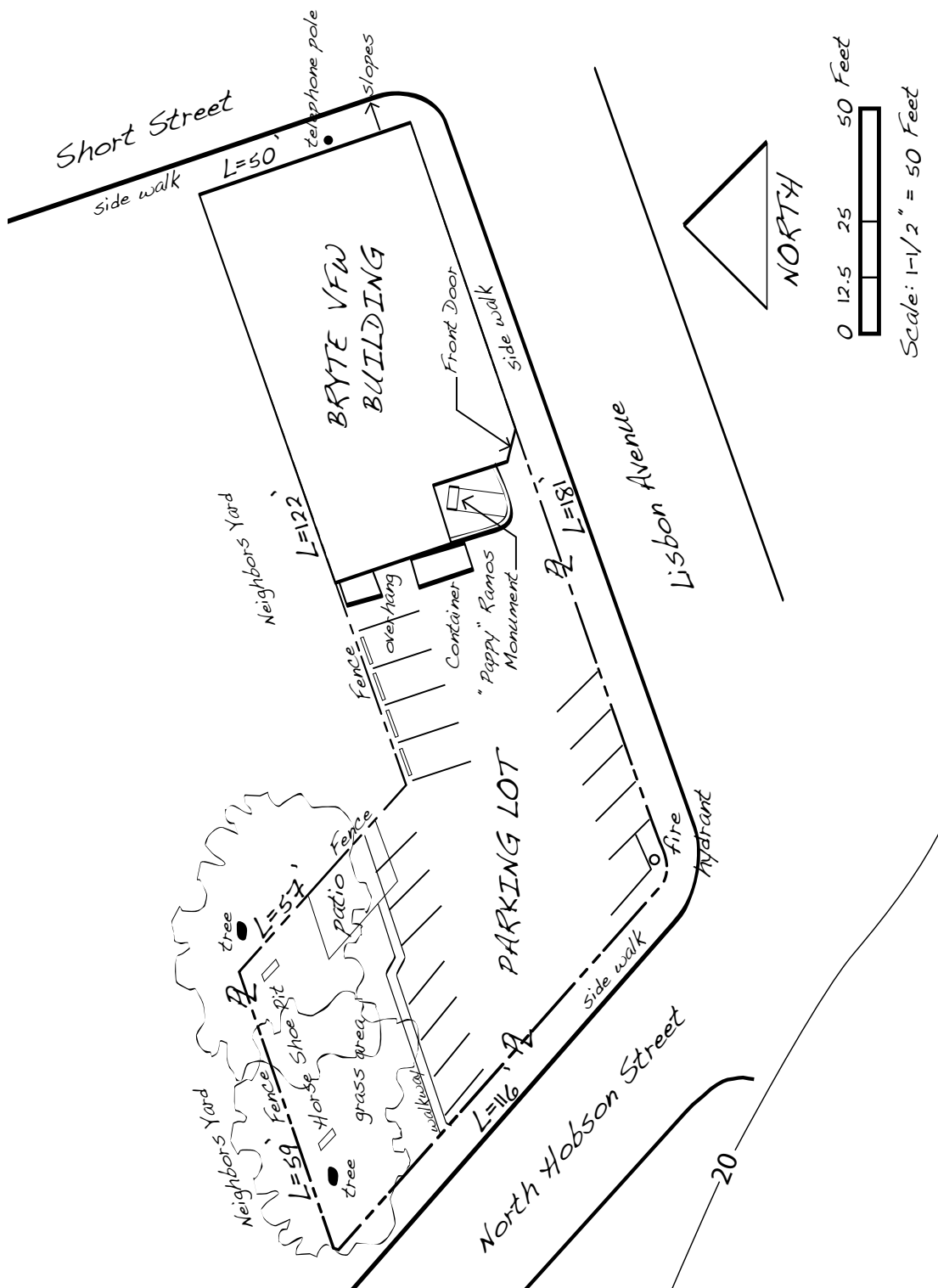
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*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder)

*Drawn by: Thomas Lewis
2018

*Date of map: December 12,



BRYTE VFW Building and Interior Plan


NORTH
Not to Scale



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CA_YoloCounty_Bryte VFW Hall_FIC_0010 (Center for Sacramento History, Acc.#1983-145-599) 10 of 16







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(Center for Sacramento History, Acc.#1983-146-601.)